



JOURNEY IN... YEAR TWO ON BEING HUMAN STORY

This lesson's Big Ideas:

- Part of being human is having a racial identity. When we say 'race' we mean many things, including skin color, hair and eye color and place of origin.
- While race is biologically an illusion, it has become 'real' as a social construct, and so forms a great part of our individual and shared human identity.
- Prejudice has its base in categorical thinking. Assumptions that we make about individuals based on a category into which we think they fit are often false and sometimes hurtful.
- Racism is a result of systematic combinations of racial prejudice and power.
- Unitarian-Universalism's first principle is that *all people have inherent worth and dignity*. Therefore, we commit ourselves to the struggle against hurtful prejudices in ourselves and racism in our world.

TEACHER REFLECTION AND PREPARATION

- 🕒 Read and reflect on these passages ahead of time

Prejudices, it is well known, are most difficult to eradicate from the heart whose soil has never been loosened or fertilized by education; they grow there, firm as weeds among rocks.

- Charlotte Brontë

I look forward confidently to the day when all who work for a living will be one with no thought to their separateness as Negroes, Jews, Italians or any other distinctions. This will be the day when we bring into full realization the American dream ~ a dream yet unfulfilled. A dream of equality of opportunity, of privilege and property widely distributed; a dream of a land where men will not take necessities from the many to give luxuries to the few; a dream of a land where men will not argue that the color of a man's skin determines the content of his character; a dream of a nation where all our gifts and resources are held not for ourselves alone, but as instruments of service for the rest of humanity; the dream of a country where every man will respect the dignity and worth of the human personality.

- Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr

This is what we are about: We plant seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that produces effects beyond our capabilities. We cannot do everything and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for God's grace to enter and do the rest. We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own.

- Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero

Lesson Materials

- Paint chips from a paint or hardware store in shades of brown, tan, peach, beige.
- Classroom library of books and short stories related to race, prejudice or the civil rights movement. Selections should represent a variety of reading levels. See attached booklist for suggestions.
- Index cards or sentence strips with pejorative, racist words to use as discussion prompts

GATHERING AND FOCUSING STORIES OF OUR INHERITANCE

🕒 5-10 minutes

- Each of us inherited our own beautiful skin color from our ancestors. Does your family have a story about its racial heritage? Adoptive families are lucky because they sometimes get two stories – the birth family’s and the chosen family’s stories – about their family’s beautiful skin or hair or eyes.
- Begin by sharing your own family’s story of racial or ethnic heritage. Be as specific as you can. Invite any other kids – no response is necessary, so you may want to do this popcorn style as opposed to in a circle and invite kids to pass if they want to.
- If a child doesn’t know about his or her ancestry or is sensitive about sharing, a simple, loving comment might be, “Well, we know one thing about your ancestors, whoever they might have been...they sure passed on [two beautiful brown eyes/some lovely curly hair/a great smile] to you!”

PRIMARY ACTIVITY ONE SO MANY WORDS FOR COLOR

🕒 5-10 minutes

- In the Story Workshop, we love to explore ideas and questions using words. We have lots of words to choose from. Funny how when we talk about our race, our skin color, we use such simple words.
 - Are ‘white’ people really white? Do ‘black’ people have black skin? Has anyone heard the words “red man” or “yellow people”?
 - What other words can we use instead of “black person” or “white person”? [with 5th-6th graders: Some African-American people prefer to be called ‘black’. I wonder why that might be the case?]
 - Are these words friendly and respectful? Are they true? What are UUs committed to: truth or untruth? Respect or disrespect?
 - Why do you think we use these words when they’re not even the right words?
 - Invite kids to share language’s words that can help us talk about skin color: brown, tan, beige, peach. Does anyone know color words in other languages?

- Poets use words in a way that is often both beautiful and true. What if we talked about our human bodies using words that were more beautiful and more true than “white” and “black”. What if we spoke like poets and painters?

Share with the kids the paint chips. Spread them out “Go Fish”-style in the center of your circle. Pull a few out and read the labels for each paint color. The colors have such interesting names. Do any of them come close to your skin? What words would best describe your skin’s unique color? If you could make up a really good name for the special color of your skin, what would it be?

IN-BETWEEN ACTIVITY

THE POWER OF WORDS

🕒 5-8 minutes

- Talking about race is a powerful thing and we need powerful words. Let’s learn some important words. We’ll write them on the flip chart.
 - PREJUDICE = “PRE”+ “JUDGE”
 - What does the “pre-” part mean? (ex. *preschool*)
 - What does it mean to judge a person?
 - Let’s come up with a *definition* in our own words that talks about the individual challenge of prejudice
 - Can you give an *example* of prejudice?
 - RACISM = PREJUDICE + POWER
 - Racism is what happens when the group of people in charge use their power in a way that is prejudiced.
 - If people with racial prejudices got to be in charge of all the sports teams, what might happen? What if they got to be in charge of all the parks? In charge of all the ice cream trucks? Those scenarios might be good examples of racism in action.
 - INHERENT WORTH and DIGNITY
 - UU’s believe that every person, no matter what they look like on the outside, has WORTH and DIGNITY on the inside. The word “INHERENT” kind of means “IN HERE” (point to your heart).
 - What does the word ‘worth’ mean?
 - What does the word ‘dignity’ mean?
 - If UUs believe in inherent worth and dignity, how do you think we probably feel about prejudice and racism?

PRIMARY ACTIVITY TWO

GRADES 1-4 –STORYTIME

GRADES 5-6 –POWER OF WORDS PART II

🕒 15-20 minutes

WITH GRADES 1 through 4

- In the classroom there will be several storybooks thematically connected to our topic. Select one or two to read aloud with the class (or invite willing groups to read a book silently and then share in pairs). Follow up with discussion questions like the following:
 - What do you think this book wants to teach us?
 - What’s the most important part of this story?
 - How do the illustrations help us with the story?

WITH GRADES 5 & 6

Sometimes, we hear people use words that hurt when they're talking about race and skin color. On index cards, several are written.

- If your group seems capable of and interested in a discussion about these words, you might proceed in the following way:
 - Which of these words have you heard spoken before?
 - When people use these words, what emotions might they be feeling? How do their voices sound?
 - As Unitarian Universalists, do you think that we choose to use these words or not? Why do we make that choice?
 - The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, "In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends." Invite the kids to explain what he might have meant.
 - Even if we choose not to use these kinds of words or say things that are untrue and unkind about people of particular racial identity, do we need to do more? Many UU people believe that we can't just stand by and be silent if people in our schools or churches or towns use unkind words, Is that a hard or easy thing to do? Why?
- **Sharing:** Invite kids to share a story, if they have one, about a time when they responded to prejudice in a way that showed they were UU and believed in inherent worth and dignity of all people. Give kids who share a story a sticker to wear for the day.
- How did/would your friends act if you stood up for your beliefs in the face of unfair prejudice. Does it help to know that our church is a place where people will cheer you on if you decide not to be silent?

CLOSING AND LEAVE-TAKING

🕒 2 minutes

Gather in a circle, take each other's hands and speak these words or something similarly hopeful from your own heart. Invite the kids to echo you every phrase or so:

We promise to see the rainbow of beauty in every human face.
We promise to honor every person's inherent worth and dignity.
We promise to work to weed out the prejudice in our own hearts and minds.
We promise to work to make the world more safe and fair for all.
We promise to see the rainbow of beauty in every human face.